

Building Trust and Confidence in the Justice System

The May 1999 *National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System*, to which Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson sent a seven-person delegation, emphasized the connection between public confidence in the courts and judicial independence, a basic tenet of the democratic system and rule of law.

The conference provided an opportunity for lawyers, judges, and members of the public to address issues of public trust and confidence in the justice system in an effort to strengthen judicial independence. Conference participants were urged to return to their home states to establish a committee to consider these issues locally. The conference was sponsored by the American Bar Association, the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, and the national League of Women Voters.

In response to the national conference, Abrahamson, State Bar of Wisconsin President Leonard L. Loeb, Director of State Courts J. Denis Moran, and Wisconsin League of Women Voters President Kathy Johnson have created a committee to identify issues related to public trust and confidence in the Wisconsin justice system and to develop potential strategies for addressing these issues. The 10-person committee and a larger focus group are expected to create a plan by June 2000 that might assist the bench and bar in maintaining and enhancing trust in the justice system. Ideally, existing entities within the State Bar, the court system, and citizens groups will implement details of the plan.

To study public perception, the Wisconsin Court System generated a 1997 report on a survey of more than 500 court users titled *Court User Opinions: Incorporating Consumer Research Into Strategic Planning*. The findings of the report were synthesized in an article titled *Familiarity Breeds Respect: How Wisconsin Citizens View Their Courts*, which appeared in *Judicature* in 1998.

Questions about the project may be directed to [A. John Voelker](#), Director of State Courts, at (608) 266-6828, or [Dan Rossmiller](#), public affairs coordinator for the State Bar of Wisconsin, at (608) 250-6025.

Public Trust & Confidence in the Justice System: *Wisconsin Initiative* Steering Committee

League of Women Voters Appointees:

Deb Augustyn - Campbellsport, WI

Atty. Cheryl Furstace Daniels - administrative law judge, Dept. of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection; Madison, WI

Melanie G. Ramey - president, League of Women Voters of Dane County; Madison, WI

State Bar of Wisconsin Appointees:

Atty. Eileen A. Hirsch - State Public Defenders Office-Appellate Division; Madison, WI

Atty. Derek C. Mosley - Milwaukee District Attorney's Office; Milwaukee, WI

Atty. Thomas A. Bailey - Bailey Law Offices and Milwaukee County Board Supervisor; Milwaukee, WI

Chief Justice/Director of State Courts Appointees:

Judge Carl Ashley - Milwaukee County Circuit Court, Milwaukee, WI

Justice Patience D. Roggensack - Court of Appeals, District IV; Madison, WI

Claudia Singleton - Jackson County Clerk of Circuit Court; Black River Falls, WI

Judge Joseph M. Troy - Outagamie County Circuit Court (chair); Appleton, WI